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ENTERING A NEW AGE OF SCIENCE FICTION: RIDLEY SCOTT'S PROMETHEUS

..... by Jessica Dwyer

The 1979 epic known as *Alien* introduced audiences to a universe of space travel, androids and creatures of unknown origin. The screenplay was written by Dan O'Bannon, but it was the design of artist H.R. Giger and the direction of Ridley Scott that brought the story to life. Afterwards, the worlds of science fiction and horror were never the same. The style, story, and performances of *Alien* set the standard for all sci-fi/horror films that followed.

After *Alien*, Ridley Scott continued to dabble within the realm of science fiction, directing classics *Blade Runner* and *Legend* (a dark-fantasy favorite of horror fans thanks to the splendid "Darkness" character played by Tim Curry). However, it has been 30 years since Scott last worked in the science-fiction genre – the same genre that brought his career as a director to the forefront so long ago. But that's soon about to change. ...

Prometheus was first conceived as a new installment to the *Alien* saga with James Cameron at the helm. After that concept fell through, Ridley Scott made his interest in possibly returning to the franchise known. However, with stories of the *Alien* species already played out, thanks to three direct sequels and the *Aliens vs. Predator* series, Scott intended to take a different approach this time out. The new story he proposed would give an origin to one of the more iconic images from the original *Alien* film, including that of the mysterious Space Jockey. It didn't take long before the project was green lit and filming was underway.

During the early stages of this film's production, however, the prequel, as it was initially touted, was suddenly being reported as "not" having any connection to *Alien* at all (in fact, the untitled project – at the time – was finally given its *Prometheus* name – further separating it from the *Alien* epic). The studio, as well as Scott himself, began to deny facts previously released about the film, providing conflicting reports on its potential backstory. Eventually, Ridley Scott as well as co-writer Damon Lindelof (and Fox) did confirm that *Prometheus* was related to the original film's premise, adding that it was set 30-plus years prior to the events on the *Nostromo*.

While the script for *Prometheus* has been kept under a tight lid – even after a brilliant panel at Comic-Con in 2011 which showcased the first footage to be shown to an audience – the plot has still retained its elusive nature – at least enough to keep fans wondering. What was obvious, however, thanks to set photos and visuals that were shared – is that Scott had not lost his sense of dark and beautiful filmmaking or his ability to make the starkness of space even more breathtaking. Over the following months, further information and additional scenes from the film were released as the marketing campaign began for what may very well be one of the biggest releases of 2012.

The film is set to star Noomi Rapace (the original *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*), Michael Fassbender (*X-Men: First Class*), Charlize Theron (*Monster*), and



Idris Elba (*The Wire*) – a powerhouse cast which only added to the film's appeal. Taking the imagination of genre fans by storm, *Prometheus*' viral marketing began with two very clever videos – the first posing as a future version of a TED event (Technology, Entertainment and Design), starring Guy Pearce as Peter Weyland, the head of Weyland Corp (i.e., Weyland-Yutani in the first *Alien* film). The video is a mock inspirational clip, showing how Weyland hopes that mankind will grow and reach their potential, although seasoned fans were able to see the slightest peek of a man starting to become drunk on his own hype and power.

If the Weyland teaser was not enough – during the 2012 Wondercon event, attendees were given a Weyland Corporation business card during the *Prometheus* film panel that had a phone number and Web site printed on it. Fans who called the number were treated to a new video link – this time a presentation on the creation of the "David 8" android, featuring Michael Fassbender, who portrays the latest android to populate the *Alien* universe.

With the film's premiere looming, fans are continually receiving further insight into the plot of the film. We now know that Scott and his scriptwriters have delved into theories which have been around for hundreds of years – theories based on the idea that aliens have visited the Earth and assisted man to "evolve." It is a subject that scientists and conspiracy theorists have bantered about for a long time and still do to this day. And that's where *Prometheus* begins. A map is discovered that combines designs from various ancient human cultures. The *Prometheus* ship and its crew are sent to follow the map, hoping it will lead them to answers about mankind's creation. But what begins as a mission of hope and discovery, turns into something far, far different. The "invitation" leads the crew to what may be the destruction of humanity.

The crew of the *Prometheus* includes archaeologist Elizabeth Shaw (Rapace) whose belief is tested as the true nature of the operation is revealed. David (Fassbender) is an android, as we mentioned, playing the handyman role on the ship. Typically, androids don't fare well in the *Alien* films, so it will be interesting to see what becomes of him. Meredith Vickers (Theron) is a Weyland representative who must find her own inner strength in order to deal with the terror that's going to befall the ship. Then, of course, there is the captain of the ship, named Janek

(Elba), a military man that is trained to retain control, even in the face of chaos. Rounding out the crew are scientist Holloway (Logan Marshall-Green), botanist Milburn (Rafe Spall), and geologist Fifield (Sean Harris).

Prometheus promises to be a film that will terrify, amaze, and blow away fans of the *Alien* franchise as well those new to the story. It has an outstanding cast and crew, and a story that's complex and mysterious, and touches upon all aspects that make the sci-fi/horror genre great. When *Prometheus* hits theaters June 8th, be ready for the ride of a lifetime. 🔥



Logan Marshall-Green, Noomi Rapace, and Michael Fassbender search for the truth.



Fun Fact: Androids are a staple in the *Alien* universe, appearing in each of the core films to date. They include Ash (Ian Holm; *Alien*), Bishop (Lance Henriksen; *Aliens/Alien3*), and Call (Winona Ryder; *Alien: Resurrection*).